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# General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

*Official Records*

**19**th plenary meeting
Saturday, 16 September 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

*President:* Mr. Holkeri (Finland)

*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

**Agenda item 9** *(continued)*

**General debate**

**The President:** I first call on the Chairman of the delegation of Luxembourg, His Excellency Mr. Hubert Wurth.

**Mr. Wurth** (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Ms. Lydie Polfer, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg regrets having had to cut short her stay in New York. She has asked me to make this statement in her place.

The Millennium Summit has given us the testimony of the heads of State and Government. This exceptional meeting was the opportunity for a renewed commitment of States throughout the world to our Organization, encouraging common efforts to give every citizen the freedom to enjoy a decent life and opening the way for self-fulfilment for individuals and their communities.

We congratulate and commend you, Sir, as the new President of the General Assembly. We also express our gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for the vigour of his presidency.

Our Secretary-General has tirelessly emphasized the urgent need to act by innovating and ensuring a sustained pace for the work of the Organization. We also commend him and especially encourage him to continue his work.

My speech today will emphasize the themes of Luxembourg's message to the Millennium Summit. The speech by Mr. Hubert Védrine, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the European Union fully reflects the point of view of my country.

In 1999 we restated the main themes of the Luxembourg Government's involvement in Europe and within the United Nations and its commitment to strengthened international solidarity, demonstrated by the fact that in 2000 my country has reached the objective set by the United Nations of official development assistance of 0.7 per cent of gross national product. This year is a time to speak further of the principle of shared responsibility, because the world has to face the old challenges of violence and development, as well as the more recent one of globalization.

Globalization is both a source of achievement and cause for concern. It is ambivalent and requires adequate instruments in order to manage it and gear it towards equitable development. Without a common definition of the rules to be applied, it could give rise to bitterness and revolt. But the use of violence might compromise the path towards development. It is a matter of concern that worldwide arms sales have been on the rise since 1996. The horror of constant violence committed by human beings against each other could simply make us grieve. However, such a passive attitude would not do justice to the realities of this world. The number of armed conflicts has in fact gone down, from 55 in 1992 to 36 in 1998, but this bare statistic does not explain how this decrease took place.

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However, another statistic should grab our attention: between 1974 and 1999, 113 countries went from an authoritarian regime to a multi-party system. More meaningful than statistics is the encouraging fact that the number of negotiation processes has increased, the key to their success often being innovative formulas to achieve peaceful coexistence where previously there was deadlock and resentment.

East Timor, the conference between Somalis in Djibouti and the new inter-Korean dialogue are recent examples. In spite of the obvious difficulties, these constructive developments show by their number and diversity that preventing conflicts is a strategy in motion. We have to consolidate this strategy of prevention in order to show that it produces lasting results. Of course, there are many failures, and we must not close our eyes to the difficulties.

In Kosovo, in particular, intolerant behaviour led to a sort of blindness, even in people who had themselves suffered oppression. Psychology teaches us that former victims do not always avoid eventually becoming executioners. We must put an end to this vicious circle and stop unbridled criminality. The commitment of the Special Representative, Bernard Kouchner, and of all those who are working to brighten a grey sky brings us a message of hope which will bear fruit.

At the end of the cold war our hopes were perhaps inspired by impatience. Today we see that there are solid foundations: above and beyond academic investigations and the awakening of conscience, concrete action is being taken. We thank the community of organizations and individuals present in the field; those who pay with their lives expect others to support them and to provide the necessary means.

But the major responsibility is not to disappoint those in direct need of assistance: victims, displaced persons and refugees, those denied the protection of the rule of law, even the means of subsistence. And when management deficiencies lead to short-sighted over-exploitation and stifling pollution of an environment that can take no more, this phenomenon should be reversed and responsibility established and assumed.

How can we believe that catastrophes will go unnoticed or that international solidarity will not bother to analyse the cause of events?

Crime must not pay. This concept will go from theory to practice in the globalization era. Information is spreading ineluctably and innovations are being made. International law may be lagging behind certain technologies, but it is in the process of being developed. For example, universal participation in the overall structure of multilateral treaties, which was strongly stimulated by the Millennium Summit. Another example is the courts to try war crimes, genocide or crimes against humanity. After the creation of tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, some countries are considering establishing courts in cooperation with the United Nations. National courts have instituted proceedings, and as a result the era of impunity is ending. Luxembourg was the eighteenth State to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which will go into effect after 41 more ratifications.

In democracy the rule of law prevails, but political action is crucial to its development. Through the major conferences of the 1990s and their follow-ups, the United Nations has shown clearly that such conferences are also an important source of law. The guidelines that emerge stimulate the creation of domestic laws, and their juxtaposition produces a vast, internationally recognized network. Future actions, including the campaign against small arms, financing for development and the World Conference against Racism, will help promote the rule of law. Stable, but not rigidly fixed, transparent and subject to democratic controls, the rule of law is certainly one of the most reliable pillars for development.

But the international community and the United Nations will have to build other pillars as well as part of the structure for a world in which poverty and violence no longer threaten us. Without going into detail, I refer to the need to remember, respect for equality, the will for prevention and openness to cooperation.

The century which is drawing to a close was the most terrible in the history of mankind in terms of absolute numbers of victims, and also in conceptual terms, because it led to the development and use of weapons of mass destruction. Above all, it saw several cases of genocide on an unheard-of scale, openly motivated by the most despicable racism. It is essential to study the mechanisms which lead to these aberrations into inhumanity, because repetitions of such

destructive phenomena should be rejected and made impossible.

The conclusion to be drawn is that we should remember, which means escaping from ignorance and always bearing in mind the lessons of the past. If the countries of the European Union are very sensitive whenever they encounter xenophobia, racism and the rejection of those who are different, it is because we are resolved at all costs to act to avoid once again succumbing to the sickness of hatred. A Europe with a growing population, a European Union spreading to the east and the south, must act with determination to continue the course of openness.

Luxembourg is a laboratory with a mixture of peoples, as a result of our being at the crossroads of French and German culture and because of the impact of immigration of long ago. The moral outlook of its citizens leads them to respect others and their individuality. With the coming of sovereignty, independence and development became a reality for our country, and with them a strong adherence to the principle of equality, whether of individuals or States.

It is the responsibility of all States to expose the dangers of any tendency to feel contempt for others. Unfortunately, division and lack of respect for the worth of the individual can be seen on every continent. Only five years ago the world deplored the most violent racist crimes in Bosnia and Rwanda. Such crimes must be rejected, for they create openings that the prejudiced quickly take advantage of. We must collectively assume responsibility in the fight against this vicious circle.

Respect for equality requires that we do not make independence a sanctuary. Rather, it demands that we accept each other as partners and recognize the legitimacy of our respective interests. Thanks to the progress of the European Union, classic sovereignty has been replaced for its member States by an interdependence whose positive effects are impressive. The solution, in the year 2000, is no longer abstract independence, but concrete cooperation.

Throughout the year 2000, the Security Council has devoted a great deal of time to Africa in recognition of the seriousness of the phenomenon of taking large portions of countries hostage. Some of these crises are being fuelled by the exploitation of natural resources. The significant international reaction to these events is encouraging, but it must also lead to the elimination of these situations. Among them, I will mention the problems in Angola, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

These catastrophes, along with other developments — in particular in East Timor, in southern Lebanon and along the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea — have contributed to a considerable increase in United Nations peacekeeping activities. However, these activities are suffering from a lack of resources, to such an extent that both their operations and their credibility are compromised. Instead of being a deterrent, they risk becoming simply an alibi.

I hope that this session will be able to adopt energetic measures to implement the recommendations of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, chaired by Mr. Brahimi. The lack of financial resources should not be an insurmountable obstacle. Further, it is appropriate to take up this issue as part of this session's agenda item on the scale of assessments for peacekeeping operations. But in fact, these activities are above all operations aimed at maintaining ceasefires. Achieving peace requires other efforts — first and foremost the will to prevent conflicts and the determination to avoid their resurgence.

After the research, the passionate discussions and the debates — most recently those that took place in the Security Council and in the General Assembly committee on the prevention of conflicts in Africa — have we found sufficient will to now take action? Such a critical mass is necessary if a determined will to prevent conflicts is going to be manifested.

Human solidarity will be essential in those instances in which the parties show they are incapable of avoiding conflict and when attacks on the integrity of individuals and major material consequences can be clearly foreseen. Indifference and lack of assistance in the face of danger no longer accord with the universal awareness of the reality of our interconnectedness, which grows in parallel with the spread of knowledge.

This is an ethical issue, but it is also an issue of knowledge and technical resources. Luxembourg intends to create a civilian action corps to go on humanitarian and human development missions. Luxembourg will contribute to the United Nations funds for peace-building, and it is involved in peacekeeping operations and in reconstruction missions.

The will to prevent conflicts entails the ability to choose from among a great range of mechanisms that are capable of dissuading those who, as a result of ignorance or provocation, are turning to aggression. This will to prevent conflicts can be that much more effective in managing disputes if it is invoked well before violence breaks out. Over eight years, the discreet action of the High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Mr. Max van der Stoel, has amply justified the confidence placed in him by 55 European States and former Soviet Republics and has produced significant results.

When people are struggling in isolation, external cooperation and solidarity can remove the most difficult obstacles. The noteworthy *Human Development Report 2000* of the United Nations Development Programme stresses the importance of preventing conflicts, of inclusive democracy and of respect for human rights as means of preventing countries that have been bled white from being excluded from the benefits of the global economy and of global technology.

For their part, Mr. Annan and Mr. Brahimi remind us that every action to reduce poverty and ensure a solid foundation for growth is a step towards preventing conflicts. This is one of the keys of development. It is a very reliable method for building confidence and reducing poverty. It is a responsibility that we must take up.

The effort cannot be undertaken unless external cooperation is not in itself an obstacle. In many cases it gives rise to questions and resistance. But cooperation that is not welcome is pointless. Unfortunately, at times mistrust and a certain pride prevail and lead to a fortress mentality. This in turn can lead to overemphasizing identity issues and to the development of a mental block.

When a terrifying earthquake rocked Turkey in 1999, the Greeks offered their assistance. This gesture and the Turks' acceptance of it have profoundly transformed bilateral relations that have been particularly difficult. This positive, spontaneous development was the result of the awareness of Foreign Ministers Papandreou and Cem that the ongoing harm being caused by the earlier mistrust was not acceptable. This positive development is continuing, and it is greatly hoped that it will soon be reflected in the conversations, under the aegis of the United Nations, between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities — conversations that are at present indirect.

When confidence comes up against the invisible wall of ignorance, even the tendered hand will not be taken. Thus, those who are separated by a psychological chasm should construct a bridgehead and express in a decent manner their willingness to achieve mutual recognition.

The Israelis and Palestinians were reconciled in significant ways as a result of the Camp David conversations. President Clinton, for his perseverance, Prime Minister Barak and President Arafat, for their awareness of history and their common acceptance of their shared responsibility to the future, deserve encouragement and the firmest support in their effort to conclude this historic process. I am convinced that the resources of this dialogue have not been exhausted. There is an opportunity to achieve, within the next few weeks, a framework agreement. It must remain clear that the willingness to cooperate has been firmly established. This willingness will be seconded by the willingness of the international community, and of Europe in particular, to offer its support to the establishment of peace and to the reconstruction efforts.

The sculpting of the role of the United Nations, the shape of its future work, will be a complex and demanding task if we expect the Organization to escape its current fragility and affirm its responsibility. But perhaps we can rely increasingly on the vast experience that has been gained during past actions. The development of this collection of experiences requires increasing internal cohesion. The responsibility for the development of this cohesion falls on the Organization's Members. This is the objective we must set for ourselves. The willingness to cooperate must lead to the elaboration of healthy administrative and financial structures, as well as to balanced relations between the principal organs, none of which should be exempt from periodic reform.

Today the United Nations cannot be said to be in a position to meet these criteria. Therefore, is it not indispensable that its Members pay their assessments without delay or conditions, and in full?

The fact that the Security Council is not being reformed and the distance between the Council and the vast majority of General Assembly members does not

contribute to the effectiveness of the Organization. The bridges that the United Nations will try to construct should include, in order to seek greater unity of action, a reinvigorated relationship between the General Assembly and a duly enlarged Security Council.

The United Nations will be put to the test. As a result of the pursuit of globalization the Organization will be in demand. Will it be capable of meeting the challenge and of responding in a way that will put the Organization at the centre of the major international discussions? Even after the Millennium Summit it would be rash to claim that this question is closed. Luxembourg hopes that it will be possible to respond positively, and Luxembourg reaffirms its willingness to cooperate so that we can proceed together in this direction.

**The President**: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Somsavat Lengsavad, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

**Mr. Lengsavad** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) *(spoke in Laotian; English text furnished by the delegation)*: At the outset, I would like, on behalf of the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, to congratulate you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to the presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that our Assembly stands to gain a great deal from your able leadership and from your wide knowledge of international affairs.

Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate the outgoing President, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, for the guidance he provided to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

The twentieth century has been an epoch of great technological and scientific discoveries and achievements. This is indeed one of the positive things about the past century that we all can be proud of. However, this same past century has brought enormous calamities and left manifold complex problems as we enter the twenty-first century.

Certainly, we have to accept the responsibility for resolving them and in order to succeed in addressing this daunting task, we must lay down sound basic foundations aimed at encouraging and building peace and international cooperation for development. This is the lofty goal of our new age that we should all strive to achieve.

In preparation for the new millennium, a number of international conferences were held on different issues under the auspices of the United Nations, such as the World Summit for Children in New York, the Earth Sunimit in Rio, the World Social Summit in Copenhagen, the World Conference on Women in Beijing, UNCTAD X in Bangkok and other international conferences of equal importance. The main objectives of those assemblies were to solve the multifaceted problems that have occurred in the world, with the hope that the new millennium will face minimal risk in every area and that humankind will concentrate its intelligence and resources on developing the economy, civilized culture and prosperity in equality, in a just and peaceful environment free from violent confrontation, with concern for poverty, disease and others. However, the objectives set forth by these conferences have not lived up to our expectations. In addition, new challenges that are far more complex have erupted in the light of globalization.

The South Summit of the Group of 77 and China, which was held in Havana in April this year, rightly identified the positive and negative sides of globalization and put forward a collective guideline for future action. The conference was of the view that the unsolved problems are the well-known issues of the growing debt, the unfavourable world trade measures imposed on goods from the developing countries — in particular, the least developed ones — as well as human resources that have not yet been developed to cope with new technologies and others. Overall, all these issues need to be seriously dealt with together between the North and the South, so as to meet the challenges and make use of favourable opportunities that will lead to a North-South cooperation based on equality and mutual interest, as explicitly expressed in the Havana Declaration.

The achievements of humankind in the past century are of immense value. We believe that, if these achievements are correctly used, happiness and prosperity will be brought to the new generation of the next century. Nonetheless, we are still yet concerned over the challenges that the new generation has to face. Today many young girls and boys worldwide have not enjoyed happy lives and lacked opportunity for education. Moreover, they are subject to exploitation

for the purpose of pornography, prostitution and drug addiction, that destroy their own future, their families, the society and, subsequently, becomes the source of international terrorism.

Similarly, the gender issue is also of great importance. Although equality between women and men is respected and women's participation in social life has increased, poverty and violence continue to be the major obstacles that affect women's life. To successfully tackle this problem, countries around the world should help each other and devote the necessary resources to this domain.

Drug abuse continues to be a subject of major concern for the international community. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Lao Government has implemented, with the cooperation and assistance of friendly countries and international organizations — in particular the United Nations International Drug Control Programme — a number of projects with a view to remedying the effects of drug abuse. Experience has shown that people involved in poppy cultivation continue to remain poor. Therefore, in order to definitely solve this problem, it is imperative to carry out alternative development projects, ensure food security, enable people to earn more by cultivating crops other than poppies, as well as traditional cultivation. The Lao Government is determined to continue its efforts in drug control and supervision. It is our hope that the international community will lend a strong helping hand in order to help us to overcome our difficulties as soon as possible for the bright future of our children.

While the world is entering the new millennium, a number of regional conflicts have been satisfactorily settled, thus responding to the aspirations of the affected nations. However, at the same time, many other regional conflicts remain unsolved and continue to cause pain and suffering to the people directly involved.

In the Middle East, durable peace has not been ensured: the inalienable national and fundamental rights of the Palestinian people have not yet been exercised. We welcome the resumption of peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. The two parties should seize this opportunity to write a new page of history based on peaceful coexistence and economic cooperation among the peoples in the region. In this perspective, we look forward to seeing the establishment of an independent Palestinian State and of respect for an existence of all States in the region, thus ensuring durable peace and cooperation between the nations, in particular between the Arab States and Israel.

The economic, commercial and financial embargo applied against the Republic of Cuba continues to cause enormous difficulties and damage to the Cuban people. In compliance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, we urge that an end be put to this restrictive commercial practice, which runs counter to the principles of the Charter, international law and the present world trend.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic is following closely the situation in the Korean peninsula. We welcome the outcome of the Korean Summit between Chairman Kim Jong Il of the National Defense Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and President Kim Dae Jung of the Republic of Korea, who met in Pyongyang last June and laid down an important foundation in response to the aspirations of the Korean people for the peaceful reunification of Korea and the settlement of the problems in the Korean peninsula through peaceful negotiations, which contributed thereby to the promotion of peace, stability and cooperation in the region.

On 2 December 2000, the Lao People's Democratic Republic will commemorate its twenty-fifth anniversary. Over this period, the Lao people have upheld the spirit of patriotism, self-sufficiency, and strength and have attracted assistance and cooperation from the international community. They have made tremendous accomplishments in national construction. As a result, their living standard has gradually improved. The most outstanding achievement, attained for the first time in the country's history, is that we have reached self-sufficiency in rice production and even have a surplus for export. The socio-economic infrastructure has been continuously expanded, the State is governed by the rule of law and freedom and democracy are respected and constantly promoted. The solidarity of the Lao people of all ethnic groups has been further strengthened. These are all fundamental factors in ensuring political stability and social order. Thanks to the policy of renewal consistent with the mechanisms of the market economy, the development of the people's right to self-determination and an open-door policy in our international relations, we are

convinced that the Lao People's Democratic Republic will be able to emerge from underdevelopment in the near future.

Globalization has had an uneven impact on the development of every country, because each nation is at a different stage in the development process. While some developing economies are making use of the increasing economic opportunities, a large number of developing countries continue to be marginalized and are therefore not in a position to benefit from this process. Most countries in the developing world continue to face problems of access to markets, capital and technology. Many are obliged to undertake painful structural reforms that are not compatible with their realities and have an undesirable negative impact that impedes their integration into the world economy. Against this backdrop, there is a need to build a favourable environment that would enable the developing countries to compete in the world trading system and to fully benefit from globalization. The United Nations has a crucial role to play in helping to make this happen.

As we bid farewell to the twentieth century, humanity is still yearning for a world of peace, a world free from want and misery, a world governed by international relations based on respect for the national sovereignty of States, co-operation for development and peaceful coexistence between peoples. The international community is therefore duty-bound to increase its cooperation in all possible areas so as to ensure that the objectives of the United Nations Summit Declaration are achieved and to bring benefits to peoples throughout the world, as well as guarantees to new generations of a better life and a more prosperous future. In this spirit, I wish the present session great success.

**The President:** I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Paskal Milo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Albania.

**Mr. Milo** (Albania): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly, and to express my strong conviction that, under your guidance, the work of this session will be conducted successfully. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my great appreciation for the work carried out by your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, and for his competent guidance of the previous session.

At the start of the new millennium, Albania, as a sovereign and peace-loving country, is committed to making its modest contribution, in the activities of the community of countries Members of the United Nations, to greater peace, stability, security and economic prosperity. It has tried to do so by creating internal political and economic stability, as well as by pursuing a foreign policy aimed at achieving constructive cooperation with the countries of South-Eastern Europe and beyond. Since last year's session, Albania has been taking further steps towards consolidating its democratic institutions and constitutional order, strengthening and liberalizing its economy and consolidating and ensuring respect for human rights. Because of the efficient measures undertaken by the Albanian Government, and thanks to the help provided by our partners, Albania is recovering from the consequences of last year's conflict in Kosovo.

Albania has become an open and safe country for foreign investment. The policies of the Albanian Government to privatize strategic sectors and absorb foreign capital are bearing fruit. The strengthening of security and public order, as well as the fight against organized crime, have reached satisfactory levels that are appreciated not only within my country, but elsewhere. The abrogation of the death penalty and the establishment of the office of Ombudsman have further raised the level of protection of and respect for human rights in Albania.

Albania is currently on the eve of local elections, which will be of fundamental importance for the future development of the country — not because of the results so much as because of the way in which the elections will be conducted. For this reason, the Albanian Government, in close cooperation with specialized international institutions, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe, the United Nations Development Programme and others, has made every effort to ensure that these elections are fair, free and democratic.

Albania has clearly expressed its intention to play a primary and constructive role in the common attempts to transform the Balkans into a developed and stable region, clearly aiming at European integration. The policy of good-neighbourliness is not simply a requirement of geography but, above all, an eloquent expression of goodwill and mutual interest in the

protection of democratic institutions, fundamental freedoms, stability and prosperity in the region. Consequently, the Albanian Government has proceeded towards the creation of stable relations of mutual cooperation with Balkan countries, considering that to be a primary strategy for future European integration.

Relations with these countries have been institutionalized not only bilaterally, but also multilaterally. Albania has placed at the core of these relations common economic, political and security interests, as well as respect for human freedoms and rights, including those of national minorities living in the territory of the Republic of Albania. It has tried to make inter-Balkan relations follow the model of existing relations among European Union member countries, with the free movement of people, goods and capital.

More than a year after the bloody conflict in Kosovo that endangered peace and stability in the region, the Albanian Government is of the opinion that the situation in Kosovo has improved significantly since the beginning of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) — the deployment of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the establishment of the United Nations administration. Hundreds of thousands of refugees have returned home, houses destroyed by the war have been rebuilt, the reconstruction of the economy and of the common administration institutions has begun and the political situation and order in the country have improved significantly.

The current situation in Kosovo contradicts the sceptical and nihilistic opinions, expressed here and there, against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military intervention in Kosovo and against the establishment of the United Nations administration there. Our memories of what happened in Kosovo a year ago will not fade, but will make us more conscious of the catastrophic consequences that the chauvinistic policy of a totalitarian regime can bring to an innocent civilian population.

In order to make a contribution to the founding of a democratic society in Kosovo in which human and national rights are fully respected, we have established very close relations with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, KFOR and their representatives. Albanians, even more than other people in the region, wish for and will welcome the democratization of Serbia, because, historically, they have suffered more than others from Serbian nationalism. Often, however, wishes do not match up with reality, and we have to be realistic.

Following very attentively the preparations for local elections in Kosovo, the Albanian Government expresses its conviction that the political forces in Kosovo will conduct their pre-electoral campaign in accordance with democratic principles and values, without acts of political violence. We would also like to express our sincere will for the full participation of the Serb community and of the other minorities in Kosovo in this electoral process because, as we have previously stated, we support a multi-ethnic and multicultural Kosovo.

I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to the entire international community to apply stronger pressure against the Milosevic regime in order to force him to release all 7,000 Albanian political prisoners and hostages being kept in the Serb prisons, to help bring the criminals who caused the massacres against the Kosovar population before the United Nations Tribunal for war crimes in the former Yugoslavia, to strengthen the international police presence and to work on strengthening judicial bodies in order to detect any kind of crime in Kosovo and combat it.

I would also like to reiterate that the realization of United Nations goals for the fulfilment of the promises to start the reconstruction of the Kosovar economy is of special importance. It should be included in regional cooperation projects, especially in the framework of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe.

Although the Balkan political scenery has changed, and the countries of the region are engaged in a process of cooperation, there still exists a source of tension and conflict in the region, a source that has consequences for the countries of the region and beyond. It is Milosevic's regime. He was not satisfied by the catastrophic 10-year-long conflicts that he personally set off in the former Yugoslavia; now he is destroying Serbia itself, as well as the remaining Yugoslavia.

Next week, presidential and parliamentary elections will be held in Serbia. The current situation there indicates that very little chance exists for them to be free and fair. The recent amendments to the Yugoslav Constitution, the brutal violence against the opposition and the student movement and the

censorship and closing down of independent media are explicit facts proving that Milosevic may transform these elections into a tool for illegally maintaining power.

Like all the rest of the international community, the Albanian Government looks forward to genuine democratic forces coming into power in Serbia, forces that possess new visions for the future of their country and of the whole region.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, I would like to thank Mr. Kouchner, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for the positive developments in Kosovo and for all that he and his staff are doing to stabilize Kosovo and to establish democratic institutions there.

As a neighbouring country, Albania closely follows developments in Montenegro. It condemns Milosevic's attempts to destabilize that Republic and to undermine the democratic and integrative processes that are being undertaken by the legitimate Montenegrin leadership. Following the good-neighbourliness principle of its foreign policy, the Albanian Government has recently developed intensively its cooperation with Montenegro. Current relations have reached the highest level ever known, having been extended to areas of mutual interest, such as political, economic and trade cooperation, the free movement of people and so forth. It is our intention to further extend and strengthen these relations in the future.

The countries in our region are involved in an already irreversible process: Euro-Atlantic integration. Not only the Balkans, but also Western Europe, is now aware of the danger stemming from a divided Europe, of the danger stemming from a Balkan region that is not integrated into the European Union. The regional conflicts of the last decade are more than sufficient to understand this tendency. Stability in the Balkans is not only in the interest of its countries, but also in the interest of the European Union itself. An economically developed and democratically consolidated Balkans cannot exist without a Europeanized Balkans. The European integration of the Balkans and its development consist of an inseparable unity. It is of no importance whether a country tries to protect its democratic institutions, laws, public order or respect human rights; it can never attain the desired success if it is not economically developed.

We are conscious that European integration is not an easy process; on the contrary, it is a long and difficult path. Before being integrated into the European Union, all the countries of our region should first be integrated among themselves, and existing societies in the Balkans should demonstrate and reflect the best features of European civilization. In order to achieve this, we should first combat and overcome extreme nationalistic concepts, mentalities and policies, because "Europeanization" means cooperation, tolerance and integration.

The end of the conflict in Kosovo marked a turning point for the future of the Balkans. The Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe was the best response to the crisis in the region. Our countries, like the European Union member countries, consider this initiative an instrument and a bridge for the integration of South-Eastern Europe into the European structures. The Albanian Government regards the implementation of the Stability Pact as one of its main priorities. Albania is highly appreciated by its international partners for the engagement and the responsibility it has shown in drafting the feasibility studies for the Stability Pact projects. We hope that the strong political will expressed in Sarajevo last year at the end of the Kosovo conflict will be vigorously followed by the will to finalize financial support for the rapid implementation of the Stability Pact projects.

Albania's achievements in its domestic and foreign policy in the year 2000 have only one goal: its further integration within Euro-Atlantic structures. The Albanian people have a clear European orientation, and that is why all Albanian Governments of the last 10 years have enjoyed their total support for their European integration policy. The present Albanian Government, representing and expressing the will of the people, has continuously fulfilled all the required conditions during the last year, aiming at reaching a higher level of relations with the European Union. We hope that in the near future the institutions of the European Union will approve the status report that the Albanian Government presented at Brussels several months ago. This approval will pave the way for the beginning of negotiations to reach Albania's association and stability agreement with the European Union. Albania's acceptance in the World Trade Organization in July this year was also an encouraging and very optimistic event in this respect.

The Albanian Government has welcomed the initiative of President Chirac to organize, on behalf of the European Union, a regional summit in Zagreb in November this year. It is another affirmation of common efforts to further advance the democratization and integration processes in the region and the consolidation of security and stability there.

The new century has started. We should keep on facing old problems, along with our new challenges. Some of those may be local crises, organized crime, traffic in human beings, terrorism, arms control and so forth, all of which require practical and well-oriented cooperation. Bitter experiences in various regions of the world, such as the Balkans, Africa, South-East Asia and so forth, made the role of such organizations as the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and others more evident. On the other hand, the world has entered the era of globalization. Despite its positive side, globalization is unavoidably accompanied by effects that may bring negative consequences, especially to small and poor countries. In order to avoid these consequences, it is necessary to compile and to implement global strategies, and the United Nations can easily do that.

Only a week has passed since one of the most distinguished events for the international community, the Millennium Summit. It was a unique meeting of all the leaders of the world, where they affirmed their goodwill to cooperate in facing the challenges of the new millennium and in strengthening the United Nations. The Albanian Government hails the results of the Summit and expresses its conviction that all United Nations Member countries should unite all their forces for the fulfilment of the commitments embodied in the final Declaration of the Summit. Following is what the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, wrote in his report:

> "We must do more than talk about our future, however. We must start to create it". *(A/54/2000, para. 17)*

It is time to take concrete steps in this direction.

**The President:** I give the floor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam, His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah.

**Prince Mohamed Bolkiah** (Brunei Darussalam): Mr. President, I should like to offer you my congratulations on your election and my best wishes for the coming year, and also to convey my great appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for his fine work and guidance over the past year.

I would like to start by thanking our Secretary-General for his report to the Millennium Summit. It is comprehensive, ethical and most impressive. We have never had anything like it before. One effect it has had is to give deep meaning to the expression "the international community". I think that in the past, we have often used this term far too lightly. Now we know what it stands for. It is spelled out in the final Declaration made by our heads of Government, which is now a textbook for the coming year. Its great ideas still echo in this Hall, and its noble aims light up the future.

In our view, it has given precise targets that can truly help developing nations. For the first time, we can distinguish clearly between immediate issues and long-term ones. This is very important, because many of the things on which we spend so much time and so many resources are not, in fact, today's issues. They are sad legacies passed on by the twentieth century.

Obviously, they are important. Each one is tragic in the consequences it has for ordinary peoples' lives. But they are all primarily the responsibility of Governments and regional organizations. The more they dominate the affairs of the United Nations, the more they stop us from concentrating on the deep-seated problems of developing nations. Those problems are the ones that can truly be called today's issues. As the Secretary-General highlighted in his Summit report, they are becoming very serious indeed. We have even had to give them a new name: "transnational issues". They each have academic titles: technological problems; demographic problems; socio-economic problems; and environmental problems. But take away the grand language, and they all add up to a simple fact: they are far too big for individual Governments to deal with, or even regional organizations.

It is all too clear that they will not be solved in the marketplace, either. The solutions will not trickle down. In fact, the global market economy has lengthened their list and created its own set of special problems.

It would all be very depressing indeed but for one thing. The Summit Declaration has clearly invited us all, as Members of the United Nations, to accept a joint international responsibility to find solutions. Naturally,

we may differ on how to go about it, but what is most important is that we have to recognize and accept the need for new priorities. Consequently, we highly value the assessment made by the Secretary-General of where these lie.

For example, we appreciate his timely advice that globalization requires policies and measures that are sensitive to the needs of developing nations. We are pleased that he has upheld the peoples' right to development as fundamental. We join him in recognizing the special concern of our friends and colleagues on the African continent. We support all that he is trying to do to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations, because this should enable it to concentrate on what it does best and is best equipped to do.

By this I mean the practical, urgent work done by its organs and agencies and its professionals and volunteers, in the field, close to the people. Much of this represents development in areas such as education and training, which are absolutely critical if the people of developing nations are to move beyond a day-to-day struggle for basic food, shelter and medicine and take part successfully in the new global economy.

It means that the work of agencies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) is vital. It needs to proceed urgently and not be held back because essential funds are diverted to solving ancient problems.

The vital tasks of the United Nations today should not be held hostage by the twentieth century. It has urgent new work to undertake for developing nations. This work can be simply summed up. It is to ensure that the phrase "developing nations" actually does mean nations that are developing — rather than what they too often tend to be, just a polite expression for the very opposite.

The Summit Declaration offers us all the chance to do just this, in friendship and cooperation, and I hope that we will do everything we can to implement its provisions. It would be the best form of appreciation we could offer to the Secretary-General and his staff at the end of a remarkable year's work.

**The President:** I give the floor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Angola, His Excellency Mr. João Bernardo de Miranda.

**Mr. Miranda** (Angola): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on behalf of my Government and on my own behalf, on your assumption of the presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

I also wish to congratulate, in particular, the outgoing President, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, for the wise and dynamic manner in which he carried out his mandate. I would also like to express our appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his unselfish efforts to make the United Nations an increasingly effective instrument, capable of dealing with the demands of our times and finding and implementing solutions for the most pressing problems of the world.

Just a few days ago, during the Millennium Summit, the leaders of the world defined the priorities of the United Nations for the twenty-first century and expressed the need to adapt its structure for the demands and challenges of the future. During that event of transcendental importance for the lives of the people of this planet, the indispensable and irreplaceable character of the United Nations in international relations was reaffirmed. Member States reiterated their promise to maintain and preserve the United Nations as a privileged mechanism for international dialogue and cooperation in the name of peace and well-being of all peoples.

Indeed, given the role of the United Nations as guarantor of peace and well-being of the peoples, it is urgent that we begin the implementation of actions aimed at adapting its internal structure to new world realities. This will permit the Organization to deal rapidly and effectively with the main problems of the world and avoid having its members resort to solutions outside the established framework of its main organs — namely, the General Assembly and the Security Council.

In recent years, the United Nations sought, through world summits, to find global solutions with broad international consensus for the many misfortunes that afflict humanity, such as local wars, degradation of the environment, violations of human rights and inadequate social development, among others. Various plans of action were outlined. However, the problems

they sought to attenuate or resolve persist. Many have even become worse.

A revision of the mechanism for implementing decisions is needed, through a revitalization and strengthening of the United Nations system, particularly that of its principal bodies, such as the Security Council. From our point of view, that body requires greater internal democracy, and its composition should reflect the current membership in the Organization and its geographic diversity. We think that, in this way, its decision-making would be faster and its performance in the area of peacekeeping and international security more effective.

The persistence of a climate of insecurity and instability in a number of regions of the world cannot be attributed solely to internal causes; it also stems from weakness in the international security system. A reflection of this are the deficiencies that still exist, for example, in the early warning system and in the peacekeeping operations mechanisms. These have not always corresponded to the desired objectives, either because the peacekeeping missions sometimes are not sent in a timely manner, or because at times, they are not provided with adequate human, material and financial resources. Sometimes this is due to the ambiguity in the mission mandate itself.

We recognize that the effectiveness of action in the area of peace and international security does not depend only on United Nations activities. There has to be renewed commitment on the part of each and every State. On this matter, I would like to applaud the recent publication of the Brahimi report.

It is our understanding that the adoption of measures at the national, regional and international levels should be made part of this commitment in order to eliminate the sources of financing for local wars. In the particular case of the African continent, the continent most affected by the scourge of war, the illicit trade in diamonds has been the primary source of support for wars incited by some rebel groups with the objective of overturning democratically elected regimes. Some new initiatives have been launched with the aim of reducing access of these "conflict diamonds" to the international market. My Government supports these initiatives and will provide any cooperation necessary for their implementation.

Another serious issue affecting international security is the circulation and transfer of small arms that flow to areas of conflict by way of rebel groups. This takes place with the connivance of certain Governments and networks of transnational organized crime. The lack of international legal instruments capable of controlling transactions of these arms is stimulating the creation of actual arms markets, above all in Africa. This is leading to an increased number of conflicts and making their resolution even more difficult. According to United Nations data, the effects of these arms on civil populations are shocking. They have already resulted in more deaths than the two world wars combined. In fact, the issue of "conflict diamonds" and the proliferation of small arms assumes special importance for Angola. It is through the sale of illegally mined diamonds that the rebels led by Jonas Savimbi reconstituted their war machine, with which they then undertook a large-scale military campaign aimed at taking power. That war campaign led to a procession of death and destruction, and it is the principal reason for the economic instability in Angola. This scenario is repeating itself in other regions of Africa and the world. For this reason, a solution is urgently required.

The economic and social development and subsequent eradication of poverty, full respect for human rights, democracy and good governance can only be achieved in absolute conditions of peace and stability. It is in this context that my Government established, as a priority, the restoration of definitive peace in Angola. As a result of its efforts to attain this objective, the general situation in Angola has significantly improved. It is for this reason that today we are more confident than ever of a future of peace, development and prosperity.

Indeed, the war has ceased to have the same intensity as it did several years ago, and the conflict itself is moving progressively towards an end. The political and military measures undertaken by the Government have significantly reduced the ability of the rebels to wage war. These measures have also allowed the Government to resume control over nearly the entire country.

More than 12,000 rebel military personnel have abandoned their arms and joined the efforts of reconstruction and national reconciliation. Those who persist in waging war have less and less space, and their activities are limited today to isolated armed attacks against civilian targets, the objective being to destroy and loot the people's property.

The military measures undertaken by the Government represent a necessary and legitimate recourse designed to stop the violence unleashed by the rebels of UNITA, which put in jeopardy the very existence of the Angolan democratic system. However, despite the fact that the ongoing measures aimed at the total control of our national borders and the elimination of the remaining pockets of criminal armed groups are having a positive impact in the search for peace, they do not constitute our only option for the resolution of armed conflict.

Simultaneously, we will continue to implement other actions aimed at guaranteeing the total implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, which for us continues to be a valid basis for the resolution of the Angolan problem. In this context, we reiterate our readiness to continue to integrate in our society all those who choose to abandon the option of war.

The international community, and the United Nations in particular, still has an active role to play in the process of restoring peace in Angola, through the continued implementation and strengthening of sanctions against the rebels led by Jonas Savimbi.

The recent nomination by the Secretary-General of the members of the mechanism to monitor the application of sanctions against the UNITA rebels, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1295 (2000), will contribute to greater international vigilance regarding possible violations. It will deny bases of support to the armed rebellion in Angola. We hope that all Members of the United Nations will extend their cooperation to that body.

The significant improvement of the situation in Angola, however, has not brought an immediate end to the effects of war on the lives of the people. The humanitarian situation continues to be critical, and for that reason we appeal to the international community to increase its assistance to the needy populations.

The positive evolution of the situation is not limited to the politico-military field; it has also carried over into the macroeconomic sector. Angola continues on the path of economic reforms which have earned the confidence of international financial institutions. This progress translated to the recent signature of an agreement with the International Monetary Fund relating to the implementation of a monitored programme.

We hope that the international community will contribute substantially through the investment of capital during the recovery phase of the Angolan economy in supporting stability and growth. Angola adopted legislation to protect foreign investment by providing incentives and guarantees.

The international situation continues to be characterized by violence and tension in various parts of the world; they constitute a serious threat to peace and stability. Angola is seriously concerned by the continuation of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in view of the grave repercussions for stability and development in the central region of Africa. The situation in that neighbouring country, which shares more than 2,000 kilometres of common border with Angola, remains quite volatile and complex. It runs the risk of a serious worsening if appropriate measures are not taken.

The resolution of the Congolese conflict must come about, fundamentally, through the implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. In spite of its shortcomings, which perhaps call for a new reading, it continues to be the only basis acceptable to all the parties involved. It respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Invading forces should withdraw completely from Congolese territory and cease immediately their support for the destabilization of that country.

These conditions, in addition to the inter-Congolese dialogue, founded on a realistic base including the unequivocal recognition of the authority of the Government in Kinshasa, will be crucial for the success of the peace process. Angola reiterates its commitment to continue to make the necessary efforts, together with the mediator, President Frederick Chiluba of Zambia, and other parties to the Lusaka Agreement, until a way out of the conflict is found.

In Sierra Leone, the prosecution of hostilities continues to delay the pacification of the country. Angola supports regional initiatives aimed at reactivating the peace process and condemns the attacks against United Nations personnel and forces. We support steps aimed at bringing to international justice the principal parties responsible for the atrocities committed against the people of that country.

In Somalia, the progress reached at the national conference led to the re-establishment of some national institutions and moved the country closer to peace.

Angola encourages the continuation of these efforts and hopes that in the near future Somalia may be able to reassume, de facto, its rightful place in the international community.

In the Horn of Africa, the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea has undergone some positive movement following the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in Algiers. We hope that the two parties honour their commitments under the accord and create conditions for the establishment of good-neighbourly relations and cooperation.

Similarly, we continue to be optimistic regarding the resolution of the conflict in Western Sahara through the implementation of the United Nations peace plan.

Angola is following with particular attention the situation in Zimbabwe, our fraternal country, and supports the efforts of the Government of that country to find a just and fair solution to the land problem that was inherited from the colonial period. In this context, we share and fully support the position expressed by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Non-Aligned Movement on land reform in Zimbabwe.

In the Middle East, the question of Palestine constitutes the fundamental cause of conflict in the region. Angola reaffirms its support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. The resolution of this conflict must encompass a political compromise between the parties involved and the effective implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions and other understandings reached.

Less than a year ago, the people of East Timor finally succeeded in exercising their right to self-determination. Angola feels pleased and compensated by this historic accomplishment, since it was one of the countries that fought in the United Nations and other international forums for the right of the Timorese people to freely choose their own destiny.

The international community, and the United Nations in particular, which is responsible for the management of the transition period, cannot permit the current climate of violence, provoked by the militias with the objective of impeding the independence of the territory, to impose itself over the will of a people that has already suffered for decades the scourge of colonialism and foreign domination. Angola strongly condemns these acts of violence, which have resulted in great loss of life, destruction and chaos. Angola appeals to the Security Council to take appropriate steps to ensure its immediate cessation.

In the past two years, the world economy has registered a clear recovery since the crisis that shook Asia. The industrial economies and the so-called emerging markets are becoming stronger and achieving considerable rates of growth. However, the present world economic order continues to be marked by sharp distortions between North and South. While the North enjoys unprecedented prosperity, the South continues to suffer poverty and social injustice. Contributing to these ills are restrictive economic measures imposed unilaterally. The embargo imposed against Cuba is one example — its principal victims are the most vulnerable strata of its population. We will continue to support the lifting of the embargo.

The international goal of reducing by one half, by the year 2015, the percentage of the world population living in extreme poverty will require strenuous efforts, above all by the wealthiest countries and international financial institutions. In particular, it will be necessary to relieve the burden of external debt, whose service payments alone absorb a large part of the financial resources of developing countries.

At the same time, steps will be necessary to attenuate the negative impact of globalization. Despite the fact that it has strengthened the spirit of community in international economic relations, globalization has benefited wealthy countries more than underdeveloped countries. The structural adjustment programmes under way in many developing countries should take account of real necessities and specifics, because many of the measures imposed by the international financial institutions have caused serious difficulties, above all of a social nature.

To conclude my remarks, I would like to call attention to the need to pay more attention to the economic situation of the African continent. This should be done in such a way as to facilitate its integration into the world market, particularly through the transfer of technology and increasing productive investment.

**The President:** I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. María Eugenia Brizuela de Ávila, Minister for Foreign Affairs of El Salvador.

**Ms. Brizuela De Ávila** (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a source of great satisfaction for me to congratulate you, Sir, a former Prime Minister of Finland, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, which faithfully reflects your personal virtues and diplomatic experience.

I am also pleased to offer my most sincere congratulations to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for his excellent work at the previous session, and in particular for his work to coordinate the preparatory activities for the Millennium Summit.

Special mention should be made of Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his indefatigable work to promote the mandate of this Organization and for his vision for strengthening its future activities, set out in his excellent report "We, the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century".

With regard to the situation in El Salvador, the process of implementing the peace agreements has been an exceptionally arduous and highly complex task that has been made possible by the firm political will of the Government; by the willingness of the Salvadoran people and all the country's political forces; and by national efforts that have enjoyed the valuable cooperation of the international community, in particular the group of friendly countries, which have always remained close to us, and the United Nations, whose verification work has contributed to the success of peace in El Salvador and to national reconciliation.

We are now entering a new phase of our history in which political and economic freedoms prevail. This will ensure the continuity of a broader and deeper process requiring the cooperation and participation of all national sectors and the renewed support of the international community in consolidating the progress achieved and in making further advances towards more humane and supportive forms of co-existence within the framework imposed by our institutions and democratic Government.

During this phase, we have opened up new possibilities and opportunities for all sectors of the country to benefit from peace in democracy and to meet together the challenge of continuing to work to reduce existing disparities in our society, particularly economic and social ones. In this vein, poverty in its various forms is and always has been a structural problem, of which every country in the world is aware. In our case, we are according it priority attention, not only to ensure that these phenomena do not undermine our emerging democracy, which was won by our people with so much pain and blood, but also so that we can assign it due support and social context.

On this basis, President Francisco Flores of El Salvador has focused his government plan on increasing the levels of well-being and progress for all Salvadorans. He has concentrated his attention on the most vulnerable and dispossessed sectors in order to improve their quality of life through a policy to generate employment and job opportunities via enhanced productivity, the promotion of trade and increased investments on the basis of shared responsibility. As President Flores has already done in this forum, I would emphasize the fact that the future of our nation is in our own hands. Each individual, group and sector of our society must assume its own responsibilities and duties in order to overcome the problems of and obstacles to the promotion of growth and sustainable human development.

Similarly, President Flores has emphasized the fact that in a globalized and interdependent world, solidarity and international cooperation are vital to complement the efforts of the developing countries in order to face the global challenges jointly and with greater capacity. It must be understood that this does not mean that the international community, and the industrialized countries in particular, are going to solve our problems, but rather that they can contribute to the creation of an international environment that provides opportunities, including policies that offer greater access to their markets for the products of developing countries, investment opportunities, the transfer of technology and information, and fulfilling the commitments made to improve development assistance.

We know that we are facing an enormous and complex task, and in this effort we hope that we can continue to rely on the valuable support of the multilateral institutions and the community of nations, with whom we share interests and problems — in particular the joint mission to preserve and consolidate peace after conflicts have come to an end. In this regard, as we celebrate the International Year for the Culture of Peace, I would like to reiterate the importance that El Salvador attaches to the continuity of the efforts focused on strengthening a culture of peace, especially on the eve of the International

Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World.

In Central America, since 1987, when the agreement on the "Procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace in Central America" was signed, our peoples have welcomed with hope and have supported national, regional and international initiatives to achieve pacification in the region. These efforts culminated in specific agreements that made it possible to end the armed conflicts in the affected countries and to carry out profound political and institutional transformations, which have contributed to improving living conditions for all the peoples in the region.

Along the way we have adopted and implemented measures and mechanisms that, in a general sense, have made it possible to guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms, establishing the base from which Central America can begin democratic life, free from armed conflicts and with legitimate and sovereignly elected Governments. These Governments, in fulfilment of their historical responsibilities, have established institutions and developed a process of consultation in order to coordinate and harmonize efforts to overcome the profound causes of conflicts and to avoid retreating from the advances achieved.

It is important to reiterate in this forum that the countries of Central America have reaffirmed our commitments to make Central America a region of peace, liberty, democracy and development, and in particular to foster gradually and progressively a Central American union. This is the best route for ensuring a prosperous future for the region and, at the same time, to strengthen our capacity to confront our problems in the best possible way, as well as to take on the new challenges arising from globalization and interdependence.

There is no doubt that the progress achieved at the regional level in the coordination and unification of the internal and external policies of the countries of the region represents real proof of the determination of our Governments to make sure that unity prevails over division. In our opinion there are more reasons that unite us than divide us, and we affirm with complete confidence that in a globalized and interdependent context the viability of Central America will depend on the joint effort to build our common historic future. This is why we must reorient our efforts so that they meet the requirements, aspirations and needs of our Central American people, through specific programmes that provide our people direct and tangible benefits.

Allow me to speak about other important items on the agenda and in the current international situation that are of interest to the Government of El Salvador.

A few days ago the Millennium Summit was concluded, and we can say that the results obtained in the deliberations and reflected in the final Declaration have inspired us with hope. In particular we are heartened by the commitments made to strengthen peace, security and disarmament. Among the most notable of these commitments are to eliminate weapons of mass destruction and to fight against transnational crime in all its dimensions, including the global problem of drugs and related crimes, against the illicit trafficking in small arms, and against international terrorism.

We also are hopeful because of the commitments on a highly sensitive and worrisome issue for our countries: development and the eradication of poverty, and also on the need to develop a multilateral trade and financial system that is open and equitable and is based on rules that are predictable and non-discriminatory. And we are also hopeful because of the commitments to make sure that the high-level intergovernmental meeting on financing for development is a success.

We should mention as well the decision to reduce by half, by the year 2015, the percentage of people on the Earth whose income is less than one dollar a day, including reducing hunger, and on access to drinking water, promoting equal access to various levels of education and promoting gender equality, reducing maternal mortality and the propagation of diseases including AIDS, and protecting vulnerable individuals.

We would also highlight the commitments made to preserve the environment and to intensify efforts to reduce the number and effects of natural disasters. We would highlight as well the commitments regarding violations of human rights, democracy and the good management of political affairs.

In our opinion the issue of the strengthening of the United Nations deserves special attention because of the situation that the Organization currently faces with regard to fulfilling its mandate, which has been apparent during the last 10 years more than at any other time in its history. A crisis of confidence, credibility

and capacity has increased the conviction of the majority of Member States that it is absolutely necessary to introduce substantive changes in the basic structure of the Organization and in its decision-making processes in order to reflect the realities of the current international order, which has greatly changed since the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations.

The international situation today is more complex, multifaceted and uncertain, blending problems and conflicts that have become permanent fixtures on the international agenda, and there are new challenges and threats that transcend national borders. These include phenomena that undermine the security, sovereignty and independence of States. Taken together, these developments provide yet further justification for the existence of the United Nations, as well as for the validity of its objectives and principles.

We recognize and welcome the changes introduced in the basic functional and administrative structure of the United Nations in order to improve its efficiency. Nevertheless, we share the general opinion regarding the imperative need to undertake integral reform. This reform should include substantial transformations in the principal organs, not only so that the Organization can better fulfil its mandate, but also to overcome the contradictions underlying provisions in the Charter so that the system will function in a truly democratic and transparent manner.

First, we must recognize that for many years now the mandate of the Economic and Social Council has been questioned. Therefore, we believe it is necessary to resume negotiations aimed at adopting measures to revitalize one the main functions of the United Nations, which is the promotion of economic and social development. In particular, priority should be granted to sustainable development, with special emphasis on fighting poverty, the fight against drugs and AIDS, the protection of the environment and respect for human rights. All of this is in conformity with the commitments in the Millennium Declaration and especially with the objectives pursued through preventive diplomacy. For this purpose, we believe it is appropriate to reexamine the initiative to create an economic security council which would be responsible for dealing with development problems.

Secondly, we believe it is extremely important to examine and evaluate the functions and powers of the General Assembly, given that this is an essential organ and the most representative body in the structure of the Organization. Nevertheless, its decisions are limited and are not binding upon the Member States. As a result efforts must be made to strengthen and broaden the Assembly's competence as a political forum in order to ensure the true role that it must play in world affairs. In particular the Assembly should be given greater responsibility in the decision-making process. This would not only strengthen the democratization and transparency of the actions of the Organization, it would also give the Assembly the legitimacy it requires in order to carry out collective action.

Thirdly, the reform of the Security Council is, from our point of view, one of the biggest challenges facing Member States; for my Government it is a matter of concern that after seven years of negotiations we have not made progress on the substantive points related to the category, number and privileges of new members, as well as on the question of the veto, which is currently an exclusive privilege of the permanent members.

The differences and the inflexible positions we have seen are unacceptable because they create a situation which, in our view, contributes to the lack of credibility and a loss of confidence in the system of collective security. It is urgent and we cannot postpone overcoming our differences and granting each other concessions so that we can reach a general, fair and equitable agreement in order to achieve the aims of the reform and realize the legitimate interests and hopes of most of the countries of the international community.

El Salvador joins in the very fair demand, expressed so many times in this forum, to increase the number of permanent and non-permanent members to include industrialized and developing countries, faithfully reflecting the current world configuration. The numbers should reflect the current membership of the Organization with equal responsibilities and due respect for geographic distribution. The use of the veto privilege should be limited to Chapter VII of the Charter.

I would like now to refer to other important issues which are part of the Assembly's agenda in the new millennium. These issues have important repercussions for Member States as regards international peace and security, as well as serious consequences for the future of our Organization.

On behalf of the people and Government of El Salvador, we welcome Tuvalu as a new Member of the Organization. This act confirms the right of people to be represented in this worldwide Organization and illustrates the universal nature of the United Nations.

The Charter was adopted on behalf of the people who comprise the international community and, consequently, the United Nations cannot, and must not, close the door to any people which expresses its sovereign will and desire to be represented in the world Organization.

May I refer to the special case which has been discussed in the Assembly each of the last eight years regarding the need to examine the exceptional international situation of the Republic of China in Taiwan with a view to guaranteeing full respect for the fundamental rights of its 23 million inhabitants to participate in the activities of the United Nations.

We support the establishment of a working group in the Assembly to examine the appropriate place that the Republic of China should have in international bodies. We want to make it quite clear that our support for this initiative is not intended as an intervention in the internal affairs of another Member State. Nor does it represent opposition to the peaceful reunification of the Chinese people. Rather, it represents the recognition of the right of a people to realize their just aspirations, a people which exercises democratic rights in a country with which we have had excellent relations for more than 50 years.

El Salvador participated with great interest in the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We recognize that, even though the results were not exactly what we desired, encouraging agreements and decisions were reached in the effort to achieve the objectives of the denuclearization regime which seeks to encourage nuclear States to act in good faith, to meet their international responsibilities and duties and to continue negotiations aimed at eliminating the threat of nuclear war. With these ideas, we join the members of the international community who have expressed their firm support for the proposal by the Secretary-General to convene an international conference aimed at seeking ways to eliminate the nuclear threat.

With regard to conventional weapons, we wish to refer specifically to small arms and light weapons in light of the fact that El Salvador underwent the tragic experience of an armed conflict during the 1980s — a conflict that was intense and of long duration precisely because of the entry and spread of this type of weaponry — weaponry which entered our country illegally in order to supply the irregular militias. However, these weapons reached other parts of the population and resulted in a large number of casualties and the phenomenon of displaced persons and refugees from the areas of conflict. This situation was solved after the signing of the Peace Agreement in 1992.

Not only do small arms and light weapons affect conflicts, be they internal or international, but traffic in these weapons has become a danger for public security and a threat to stability, as well as a threat to the democracy and sovereignty of States, when these weapons are used in activities that constitute transnational threats, such as terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering and international crime. For this reason we firmly support the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held in 2001.

With regard to domestic or international conflicts that continue to occupy the attention of the international community and our Organization, we can only express our concern and regret that agreements have not yet been reached to guarantee peace, despite multilateral efforts. We urge all parties directly involved in each of the countries in conflict to abandon their individual or group interests so that through a national effort, political agreements can be reached which will make it possible for lasting permanent peace to be established in conformity with the aspirations of the peoples.

May I also refer to the Middle East. Here we believe that the recent negotiations at Camp David are an important step in the difficult road to peace. We hope that it will be possible to achieve stable and lasting peace within sure borders for all the peoples of the region.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize that the Millennium Summit and the Millennium Assembly are historic events that could mark the beginning of a new era in the international order. Indeed, the Millennium Declaration is an ambitious but vital programme to collectively resolve our common problems. Hence, it is imperative that the commitments which we have made become a reality and, in the short term, we should take concrete steps and show political will for their

implementation. The peoples and Governments of the developing world will be watching closely and we shall do our utmost to implement those commitments. From a realistic point of view they require the decisive support of the developed world in order to be fully implemented.

**The President:** I now call on the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and the Francophonie of Gabon, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping.

**Mr. Ping** (Gabon) *(spoke in French)*: I welcome the opportunity and the honour afforded me to speak on behalf of Gabon at this session of the Assembly which, although a regular one, is no less an exceptional one.

Indeed, not only does this session prepare us to enter fully into the third millennium but also, and above all, it is being held at a time in the history of humankind that gives rise to new encouraging prospects in the minds of men throughout the world for a better future.

This is why, Mr. President, we welcome your election to the presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the Assembly.

We are in fact convinced that your qualities as a statesman and your wealth of personal experience are a guarantee for the success of our work.

With this in view, Gabon, as a Vice-President, will give you its full cooperation so that this session might effectively meet our expectations.

I am pleased to express my deep gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia, for the efficient way in which he discharged his mandate.

We, in our turn, would like to warmly welcome the State of Tuvalu, which has just joined the great family of the United Nations.

I should like to pay a sincere tribute to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his steadfast efforts to realize the ideals of our Organization.

It has been 55 years since "We the peoples of the United Nations" decided to maintain international peace and security, to achieve international cooperation in solving international economic and social problems and in encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to race, language or religion.

These are the primary missions set out in the United Nations Charter, which, in Article 55, recommends the creation of conditions of stability and well-being necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among — and, I would add, within — nations.

The San Francisco Charter clearly established a close correlation between peace and development. Indeed, without peace there can be no development, and without development there can be no just and lasting peace. We acknowledge that it is difficult to create conditions of increased prosperity for the greatest number in an environment where chaos and disorder reign. In this regard, the case of Africa is particularly revealing. When, after the end of the cold war, the world seemed to be developing towards a promising situation because of the gradual reduction of inter-State conflicts, the African continent suddenly fell victim to armed confrontations of unprecedented violence. Dormant antagonisms have been reawakened, with the primary manifestation being the clash of arms and disdain for fundamental humanitarian norms.

Several of our countries have come under the yoke of warlords and become chaotic, ungovernable entities that now require humanitarian assistance. Despite the 50 or so peacekeeping operations that it has undertaken since the creation of the United Nations, the Security Council has shown its limitations in the face of crises, especially in Africa. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Sierra Leone and Somalia are all cases that, in recent memory, have put the solidarity of the United Nations to the test.

In the area of development, the world has seen unprecedented economic progress in the past 55 years. Countries that were underdeveloped not very long ago have become dynamic centres of world economic activity. But there is another fact: the vast majority of our countries and peoples remain desperately poor.

In his message to commemorate the World Day of Peace, His Holiness Pope John Paul II wrote,

> "At the beginning of a new century, the one issue which most challenges our human and Christian consciences is the poverty of countless millions of men and women."

According to the report (A/55/1) of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization dated

30 August 2000, almost half of the world's population must content itself with living on less than $2 per person per day. So it is that 300 million Africans do not have even $1 a day on which to subsist. Furthermore, this poverty is being made worse, in particular by the rapid spread of AIDS, another scourge that has ravaged, brought suffering to, divided and decimated entire families in Africa and throughout the world. In some African countries, AIDS has even become the main cause of death.

These are factors for destabilization. While they are all different, together they create disorder and make international relations uncertain. But I do not intend merely to provide a list of all the evils with which the Assembly is only too well acquainted and the United Nations is constantly dealing. Nor should we neglect the efforts undertaken and the progress achieved. Rather, I should like to stress — here I am in agreement with the Assembly — that the United Nations and the multilateral system do not have sufficient resources to face these major challenges. We have been working at this for a long time now. We cannot now give in to discouragement. We are duty-bound to give the necessary impetus to our action.

How are we to do this? First, by moving from a culture of war to a genuine culture of peace. Gabon's dedication to the ideal of peace, which is a constant element of its foreign policy, draws its strength from the same roots as the Bantu civilization. We have a duty to give pride of place to the virtues of dialogue and tolerance among peoples and nations — virtues that we practise in our homes and families, and that my country, through the personal intercession of President Omar Bongo, a tireless mediator, has made into a principle of political and diplomatic culture.

We must therefore return to our roots. That is, we should go back to those traditional precepts that have greater force today than ever before, given that today, peace is most often threatened not from outside our territories but from within. We must adapt the United Nations Charter to these new situations, in particular by adjusting the mandate of the Security Council with regard to internal crises.

It is in this context that we welcome the issuance of the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, presided over by Mr. Brahimi. We are convinced that this report will help to promote a new approach to peacekeeping operations. Although peacekeeping operations are necessary as a means of responding, they are nevertheless insufficient. What is at stake in the third millennium is not simply the achievement of ceasefires among adversaries in open conflicts, but the ability to nip conflicts in the bud through action designed to eliminate the deep-rooted causes of violence.

An important step would be the creation or strengthening of regional security machinery to allow us to resolve conflicts through dialogue and negotiation, thus enabling us to considerably reduce military expenditure and allocate the resources thereby released to other development needs.

At the subregional level, therefore, Gabon is contributing, in cooperation with the other States of Central Africa, to the establishment of a climate of confidence after implementing preventive diplomacy.

The heads of State of our subregion have, for example, set up the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), a body for military and political cooperation between the member States of the Economic Community of Central African States, to promote measures to maintain and consolidate peace and security. COPAX has a multinational force for Central Africa and an early-warning mechanism for Central Africa.

The Gabonese Government has taken practical and financial steps for the effective start of MARAC's activities, for which it is the headquarters. However, it goes without saying that it is with the support of the United Nations and other partners that this instrument will play its role fully.

In a broader regional context, a similar framework for joint action, cooperation, development, prevention, management and conflict resolution, the Gulf of Guinea commission, made up of neighbouring Nigeria and seven coastal central African States, was created on 19 November 1999 in Libreville.

Finally, it is important to strengthen the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation machinery. Gabon, which ratified the Convention banning anti-personnel landmines, the Convention banning chemical weapons and the Treaty banning nuclear testing, will continue to actively support international disarmament efforts by encouraging the process that has been set in motion of combating the illicit trade in light arms and small weapons. The convening, in the summer of 2001, of an

international conference on that trade is important, since it is quite clear that most conflicts in Africa and elsewhere in the world are fed by traffickers in arms, drugs and diamonds, and are supported by, among other things, a number of major multinational corporations that benefit from ill-gotten gains, providing arms and drugs to the conflict zones and participating in money-laundering operations.

We also unreservedly support the creation of the International Criminal Court, and strongly advocate the rapid entry into force of the Rome Statute.

With regard to strengthening the fight against poverty and the initiation of new cooperation in the service of development, the African continent accepts that it bears the primary responsibility for its economic recovery and that success in this task depends mainly on its own efforts. But, at a time when the world is happily entering the twenty-first century, Africa, marginalized, is prey to destitution and poverty. The scope of the crisis it is experiencing and the importance of the resources to be made available require that the international community support its efforts through increased concessional resources, expansion of commerce and trade and debt relief.

Cooperation on this painful issue of poverty was discussed last January in Libreville by the heads of State and Government of sub-Saharan Africa and the Bretton Woods institutions, at a conference where a new approach to poverty eradication was proposed, with a target date of 2015. During that economic summit the heads of State and Government made recommendations on considering the continent's prospects at the dawn of the new millennium and on the challenges to be faced in speeding up economic growth and eradicating poverty.

There is no doubt that poverty eradication requires much quicker economic growth, with its fruits benefiting the greatest number. In this regard, social justice is a useful guide if we wish development and economic growth to produce beneficial results that are more equitably shared.

Our heads of State and Government committed themselves to redoubling their efforts to promote solid and sustainable growth in order to reduce poverty. Furthermore, they reiterated their determination to speed up the process of subregional and regional integration already begun with the creation of the African Union this year in Lomé.

An open and interdependent world needs mechanisms to retain its balance and to help promote justice by preventing aggression against individuals and nature. It also needs participation in development for all countries and peoples and efficiency in economic relations by encouraging transparency, predictability and stability in international relations.

One solution would be — and on this point I agree with the view of many experts — for international development cooperation to cover not only assistance, but also all activities necessary to guarantee sustainable development throughout the world based on the individual.

We could then agree that development assistance first contributes to creating national conditions for development and to combating poverty, which is obviously incompatible with justice, popular participation and effectiveness.

As necessary as the achievement of food self-sufficiency throughout the world may appear, the national capacity of the developing world should be strengthened in order to facilitate the effective implementation of international agreements on environmental protection, trade liberalization, macroeconomic management and banking supervision, which are so essential to the proper functioning of a globalized economy.

Looking back at history, one can see that after the Second World War development cooperation was synonymous with solidarity and aid: assistance from the richest countries to the poorest. It is time for this cooperation to be transformed, made more dynamic and, above all, become part of the new fact of globalization.

The recent ministerial meeting initiated by Mr. Mark Malloch Brown, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), highlighted the need to strengthen the institution's capacity in order to fulfil its mission more effectively. This strengthening is particularly necessary, since today, more than ever before, it is not possible to conceive of development without taking environmental requirements duly into account. UNDP could, for instance, intensify its assistance to countries that draw part of their resources from forest products to achieve sustainable and ecologically viable management of the forests.

With regard to strengthening protection of the environment, the debate under way in the United Nations, which consists of blaming only the forest countries, is unjust, since we know that the greenhouse gas emissions produced by the industrialized countries are largely responsible for the harm done to our planet. Passing responsibility back and forth would not be constructive. To the contrary, we should rather search together, in the spirit of the 1992 Rio Conference, for ways and means to enable us all to preserve the balance of our natural ecosystem.

I turn to the alleviation of the crushing external debt burden. On this crucial point, my country devotes nearly half its annual budget to repaying debt, thereby compromising its efforts and chances for development. The debt relief mechanisms advocated in recent years have been discriminatory with regard to our country by excluding us from their application. We say that the reasoning is unfair, being based on our high per capita gross domestic product, without taking into account either our ability to pay or the seriously disproportionate distribution of national income between capital, labour and taxation.

A study carried out recently by a team of university specialists in Gabon shows that less than 40 per cent of our gross domestic product is likely to cause a multiplier effect locally.

The peculiar situation of Gabon, the only country in the so-called intermediate-income category in sub-Saharan Africa, is due to the fact that its wealth is produced by, and for, external protagonists.

Thus the appeal made to the international community for a fairer treatment of my country's debt and that of others is not simply a form of begging. What is at stake is the strengthening of the international trading system for the benefit of all, so that globalization, as the Secretary-General has quite rightly said, might become a positive force for all of humankind. The debt problem remains a major source of concern for African countries, not just my own. We believe that our partners should show some imagination rather than coming up with the same tired solutions.

That is why, in considering the debt problem, account should be taken not only of socio-economic [illegible] of the efforts made by a State to environment. We will say it again: helping the South helps the North and helps everyone.

The status of the developing countries, particularly those of Africa, requires broad-based action on the part of the international community in order to translate into reality our duties of solidarity towards peoples.

Official development assistance continues to decline. Following up on the recommendations of the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, recently reaffirmed in Geneva, my country, in its fight against poverty, is now implementing the 20/20 initiative — that is, 20 per cent of its national budget and 20 per cent of official development assistance are allocated to basic social services. We all know here that the 20/20 initiative is an excellent way to combat poverty.

Regrettably, Gabon's efforts have been hampered by the dizzying decline in official development assistance and its exclusion from the benefits of external concessional financing.

I turn now to the protection of vulnerable peoples and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Another aspect of political and social problems in Africa and throughout the world is the status of women and children in society. In my country, women have the same rights as men. Our educational system ensures free schooling for all school-age children, in the interests of the Gabonese nation as a whole. School enrolment has risen from 27 per cent in 1950 to more than 90 per cent today.

Furthermore, my country is resolutely committed to promoting and protecting the rights of the child. Accordingly, we hosted in February 2000 in Libreville an international conference on trafficking in children and on child labour.

We call for the implementation of the recommendations of that conference, which are a direct follow-up to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two additional Protocols, signed here by the head of State of Gabon.

Regarding the campaign against HIV/AIDS, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that, at the initiative of President Bongo, the Gabonese Government has just

international solidarity fund to combat AIDS would no doubt help the 35 million people stricken with this illness, the majority of whom are in developing countries, especially in Africa.

I turn now to the reform and restructuring of the United Nations system. In his report entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century", the Secretary-General emphasized the need to renew the United Nations. This renewal requires that we identify the major assets of the United Nations, rebuild its infrastructure and information-technology capacities, and continue the peaceful revolution — that is, the reforms begun in 1997.

In this context, it is necessary to revise the scale of assessments. It is in the interest of us all that we readjust the scale of assessments, so that the burden of the Organization's expenditures, and thereby its freedom of action, does not rest on the shoulders of only a few Member States.

The current millennium, a symbol of divine generosity and perfection to which we are bearing witness, has the potential to give rise to further progress in the building of a more just and peaceful world. Every nation represented here is a reflection of humankind, whose common values were recalled by the founders of the United Nations. Humanity is itself in the image of God, and we must therefore together bring to fruition the precious gifts bestowed by our Creator: love, peace and freedom.

The United Nations must retain what has shown itself to be tried and true, adapt where necessary and devise new forms of regulation.

**The President**: I give the floor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communities of Cape Verde, His Excellency Mr. Rui Alberto de Figueiredo Soares.

**Mr. Soares** (Cape Verde) *(spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation)*: Let me congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over this fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I am confident that your well-known experience in the fields of politics and diplomacy will ensure the success of our work.

To your predecessor, Minister Theo-Ben Gurirab, I would like to convey my delegation's appreciation of

I would like also to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the remarkable contribution made by his report, "We the peoples", which provides a solid foundation for our discussions and for our common efforts to place this Organization increasingly in the service of our community of nations.

It is with satisfaction that I extend my warmest congratulations to Tuvalu, a member of the community of small island developing States, on its admission to the United Nations.

During the current session of the General Assembly, important meetings will take place that will address issues vital to the international community. These issues include financing for development; racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; and the development of the least developed countries. These global meetings will certainly significantly enrich the set of consensus documents which we have successfully produced, particularly during the 1990s, and which are intended to provide us with essential frameworks for the optimization of an updated international cooperation.

As is well known, this resource has not been exploited to any great extent. North-South dialogue continues to be affected by reciprocal accusations between worlds separated by gross disparities in the level of well-being.

The world needs to be governed well and in a spirit of cooperation if we really wish to achieve development, justice and peace in a climate of social stability.

And yet, on both the national and international levels, the privileged continue to deny others open participation and a fair share. Thus, the question of governance arises at all levels. But at each level, those in whose interest it is to maintain the status quo use the other level's deficiencies to justify their own inaction. It is a perverse logic to think that our partners' errors authorize us to err as well. This is a pattern of behaviour, and even an assertion, which has been portrayed as reflecting a reality of life; how this is to be overcome has yet to be clarified.

It will be some time before we see even the

highest level, the meetings between international leaders served as a platform for the growing, insistent affirmation that we have the know-how and the means to solve the problems of our societies and of the common ground on which we live. What we lack is the appropriate implementation of decisions and the necessary will to do so. By this, I mean the political will to accomplish collectively what is necessary and sufficient so that we may achieve progress for all humankind, a long-time goal of our ideology and our discourse.

Awareness of the need for this political will stem from the underlying belief that we make up, and are part of, an interdependent international community whose essence links the destinies of all to the success or failure of a single endeavour.

Meanwhile, in the blend of competition and cooperation that characterizes international relations, the scale is still weighted in favour of a framework of inequalities, asymmetries and egotism that increasingly impairs our capacities and our imagination in the effort to achieve general progress and well-being.

Thus, a vital question is that of the extent to which we will see, at the international level, and particularly in the case of those who benefit most from the current situation, a growing belief in the existence of true independence and in the urgency of the need for coordination and cooperation commensurate with such global interdependence.

At the same time, we need to view globalization not as it is today — exclusive, fragmented and offering opportunities only to a select few — but rather as a process that will increasingly reveal and establish the world as a single body.

The Millennium Summit once again posed the question of the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. I believe that our universal Organization has an essential role to play as a catalyst for the tangible realization of the concept of international community inscribed within its Charter and as a basis for its political vision. In the world of today and tomorrow, where events are the result of action by a variety of decision makers, the promotion of such an endeavour by the United Nations presupposes the involvement of all parties concerned — that is, Governments, of course, but also parliaments, the general public, organizations of civil society — of them can and should be included in this undertaking, the purpose of which is to reveal the convergence transcending the apparent contradictions.

As a free, universal association of States, the United Nations has as its mission, and should make itself able, to gather the world's voices and to give them room for dialogue in pursuit of higher platforms of understanding. In that regard, the fundamental values embodied in the Millennium Declaration provide a lasting source of inspiration.

In the short term, however, we need a consistent set of measures in order to create an enabling environment for development in which poverty eradication can be sustainably achieved. The priorities to be considered in developing such measures will vary to some extent. In the areas of greatest poverty, such as the African continent, it is certainly essential to reverse the decline in public health and to devote the necessary resources to improving the quality and expanding the scope of public education. In today's world, there can be no development unless the people have reached a minimum level of health and education, and unless the country in question has reached a reasonable level of infrastructure, without which it cannot viably accept the economic investment that it needs.

Furthermore, countless developing countries continue to hope for lasting solutions to the core problem of an unsustainable debt burden, solutions to replace the long string of half-measures, always too little and too late, with which this issue has been addressed in the past.

Even with adequate economic policies, a responsible administration and a productive society, States' capacity to make real, continued progress will be significantly limited if they face restricted access to international markets and if tariff and non-tariff barriers are imposed on them. Particularly in the case of the least developed countries, these constraints may make it impossible for them to integrate into the global economy.

Before closing, I wish to express my deepest concern at the form and intensity of the conflicts that continue to affect the daily lives of various countries and their peoples, with disastrous consequences at the internal and regional levels. In that regard, it is with the greatest apprehension that we view the current situation in Sierra Leone, a country of our subregion

involving the coordination of efforts by the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) will help restore to the people of Sierra Leone the peace and stability to which they are entitled.

Cape Verde continues to follow closely the situation in Angola, a country with which we share a long history. Owing to the refusal of UNITA to respect the relevant Security Council resolutions and to comply with the provisions of the Lusaka Protocol, the humanitarian drama that affects the Angolan people and, in particular, the massive numbers of refugees and displaced persons, has reached intolerable levels. The international community should therefore give the highest priority to providing humanitarian assistance to Angola.

In East Timor, the laudable efforts of the United Nations augur well for the exercise of direct sovereignty and self-determination in the near future. However, there are signs of continued efforts to disrupt this process. The recent murder of international civil servants serving as peacekeepers merits the deepest condemnation of the international community and adequate measures by the Security Council.

The role of the United Nations, increasingly focused on the value and dignity of human beings, requires each of us — large and small, rich and poor — to wager confidently on the solidarity of our common efforts as the touchstone in our collective search for solutions to the problems affecting our planet.

**The President:** I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yerodia Abdoulaye Ndombasi, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**Mr. Ndombasi** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): Once again I shall rely on the kindness of those who interpret our speeches, since I am yet again putting them to the test of working without a written text.

I shall switch between repetition and familiar issues, between deception and truth.

First, repetition. As last year, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Laurent-Desire Kabila, has sent me to this very same rostrum to speak about the same issues. Once again our invaders and aggressors — from Rwanda and Uganda — in this again. This falls under the heading of "repetition". I shall talk about this issue in the spirit and the letter of the principles of the United Nations. The letter is important insofar as it helps us make sense of this situation. I would suggest to delegations a small exercise regarding the reputedly historic work we do here. By playing with "historic" a little, by transposing a letter or two, another meaning can be found.

I am awaiting the letter of the solution that the United Nations will adopt one day regarding the problem of the aggression against, and occupation of, our country by people who are here in this very Hall and who have spoken falsely yesterday and today. Uganda has said that it has come to my country in order to solve problems among the Congolese. Have the Ugandans come as tourists? Have they come as scientific researchers?

We need to return to the letter of the definition of "aggression". These people, who ordinarily are our neighbours, leave their country, cross our borders, come into our country and are occupying it even as I speak. And, as if they had not already gone too far, they have taken it upon themselves to say what we should do to settle the problems among the Congolese people. They do not talk about inter-Ugandan dialogue, they do not talk about inter-Rwandan dialogue. They talk about the inter-Congolese dialogue. Perhaps that is why they are slitting people's throats, massacring people, cutting off penises, burying women alive. They are planting fields of arms in the way that Van Gogh planted fields of sunflowers, burying women alive and leaving their arms sticking out of their graves — with the idea of later harvesting arms. They have multiplied the number of Dachaus by thousands. They shut up our populations in their humble huts and then set the huts on fire. Perhaps this is their understanding of participating in a solution to the Congolese problem. Unjustifiably!

It is a deception for the head of State of one of these countries to play around in New York and say "We will not leave the Democratic Republic of the Congo." Notwithstanding the clear resolutions of the Security Council — resolutions 1234 (1999) and 1304 (2000) — which state plainly that the Rwandans, the Ugandans and Burundians must leave the Democratic Republic of the Congo, representatives of those countries come here and say "We will not leave." These impostors come to this [illegible]

leaders and other representatives of the countries gathered here.

I do not want someone to tell me — even if it is true —

*(spoke in English)*

"You have made a wonderful speech."

*(spoke in French)*

I want to be told "We shall report back to our Governments and heads of State what you said, because it is the truth", truth in response to deception. As the philosopher Spinoza said, "Verum index sui et falsi"; that is, truth is a touchstone both of the truth itself and of falsehood. One of our singers — his name, Koffi Olomide, is worth remembering — sings, in one of the languages that are well known to Africans who listen to Congolese music and from which I am translating, "A lie takes the elevator, but the truth uses the stairs." The phrase is even prettier in Lingala.

And so it is — the lies of the aggressors have quickly arisen to fool people. They are trying to pass for little lambs, these people who are in a country that is not their own, where no one wants them to be and where they have not been invited. They are there. And they have the nerve to say "We will not leave", notwithstanding the clear Security Council resolutions that enjoin them to leave our country without delay or conditions.

I am repeating today what I said last year; however, I must repeat this because these people are still in my country and show no sign of leaving. They have outrageous plans, such as creating a "Great Lakes Republic" by cutting up our country and joining entire provinces of it to their countries.

All of this will seem quite clear if you look at a map of my country. You will see that our 2.347 million square kilometres are located amid small asteroids that gravitate around it in some sort of Brownian motion. They enter our country, massacre people and, as I said earlier, shamelessly state that they are not going to leave. They believe that this lie will prevail because it has taken the lift, while our truth has to take the stairs. But I believe that our truth is making headway in your minds. Right is on our side.

None of our own soldiers are in Kigali or in Kampala, but there is an unwanted multitude of foreign weaponry. No doubt they are there for tourism. Since we are embarking upon a historic millennium — and we should consider the meaning of that adjective — we must remind those people that they have to leave now, today. They should go home. They must not remain in my country because what they are doing is abominable.

I have given the Assembly a Dantesque description of what these people are doing in my country, supposedly for peaceful reasons. They are massacring people, as I have stated. They are burying women alive and cutting off the penises of prisoners. This needs to be analysed. Why would anyone do that to prisoners? The lies in the lift will not tell you about that, but the stairway will. I hope you will inform your respective Governments of the realities of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. People say it is complex, but in fact it is not complex at all. Those people are not in their country. They have crossed our borders, supposedly to secure their own borders and supposedly because the *genocidaires* are in my country, occasionally returning to their own countries to sow disorder.

Once again, look at a map of our country. You will see that the asteroids that I mentioned, Rwanda in particular, have borders on Lake Kivu. It is a very small area that is the real border between us. If you look at the map, you will see that these asteroids, in order to secure their borders, have gone 2,000 kilometres beyond this real border, to the Atlantic, to start a war. We do not know how they manage to move their soldiers around because they do not have aeroplanes, however, know that they manage. They move heavy weaponry 2,000 kilometres in order to start a war, the purpose of which is to defend their borders 2,000 kilometres away. Who can possibly believe this? Who can claim that this is the truth? When you wish to defend and secure your border, you put your troops at your border so that others do not cross.

There is yet another lie: they say that they are pursuing the perpetrators of the genocide that everyone remembers from 1994. They claim that they are pursuing them because they have hidden in our country. Well, these people occupy two provinces in the border area of our country and one other province that is even farther away, farther from the equator.

They have never caught any *genocidaires*, living or dead. It would be a shock if they did. The Rwandans

are saying that there are *génocidaires* in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to justify their presence. However, they have never caught any.

Why have they never caught a *génocidaire*? I think they are incapable of doing two things at once. Each Rwandan or Ugandan has only two hands, and those two hands are busy. Do you know what they are doing? They are taking our diamonds, copper, gold, precious wood and rare animals, which they do not have on their asteroids. And they are becoming diamond exporters. If you look at the stock exchange, you will see that Rwanda this month exported so many diamonds, but those diamonds are covered in the blood of the Congolese people. The "gemocracy" that employs them is doing the same thing in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Angola. One could say that the common denominator between those countries and ours is that we are under the thumb of "gemocrats" who prevent us from creating democracy. We have "gemocrats" against democrats. That is the deepest meaning to be found in these poor countries that wish to become rich through pillaging and plundering, which they do in the full light of day where everyone can see them. What is more surprising still is that nobody tells them to stop their plundering and go home. This is an absolute fraud, and it threatens our African brothers as well. A country that is one eightieth the size of ours, that not long ago, before Lumumba, held the reins of our country, dares to allow its justice system — because in our country there are patriots and nationalists —

I come from a province near the Atlantic, 2,000 kilometres away from the Rwandan border. I see appear in my province people who are easily recognized by their phenotype, accompanied by some Congolese passing through the province on their way to Kinshasa. They even go to the airport to defend their borders, which are 2,000 kilometres away. Our patriots and nationalists stand up and do not welcome them. We tell them what we must tell them, as a true patriot would do in the face of the invader.

That country, one eightieth the size of our own, allows its justice system to prosecute me, to issue an arrest warrant against me and to inform all other countries that if I go to their country, I should be arrested for crimes against humanity, just because I spoke as a patriot against those who have come into my country.

One country, more powerful than the others, has asked, because of the thrashing it has received, to be allowed a corridor to the Atlantic. We do not know how these people got to the province of Kivu, which they have virtually annexed. They have changed the local administrators, appointed new governors and changed the telephone system. In order to call this province, you have to dial the code for Rwanda. This is well known. They even direct automobile traffic. In other words, they have completely taken over our province. Nonetheless, in their speeches they say they are in favour of the territorial integrity and political independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the same time, though, they are appointing governors in our country, changing the names of our streets and making decisions as if it were their country.

These countries have spilled blood in our jungle and dare to assume the right to tell us who our Minister for Foreign Affairs should be. In threatening my freedom of movement, perhaps they imagined that I would not manage to reach New York, but we have more than one trick up our sleeve. Here I am. I will leave New York and go wherever my President tells me to go. We hope that other countries that wish to maintain good relations with us will refuse to heed these uneducated judges.

I say "uneducated" because I have urged our people to rise and crush the invaders and to make them eat their words, but these judges thought I had called for the invaders to be strangled. These judges are so uneducated they did not realize that I was quoting Voltaire. And now that I've admitted to quoting Voltaire, they will probably issue international arrest warrants for him, because they have no idea who he was. Who are these countries to appoint themselves universal judges and to prosecute people who are not their citizens for acts that were not committed in their territories? These judges do not rely on law — since their position is indefensible — but on the law of the jungle, because they are hunters. They made their pronouncements two years ago. They are like hunters who make no sound as they stalk their prey, but I too am silent. I have not been warned or notified, but INTERPOL knows it must arrest me if it gets its hands on me. They have been just like big game hunters.

Everyone knows what happened to our Prime Minister, Mr. Lumumba. In the tragedy in which a Secretary-General of the United Nations lost his life, the people — one person in particular — who carried

out that dirty work dissolved Lumumba's body in sulphuric acid. Perhaps they are after me now because they are suffering a shortage of sulphuric acid. This gentlemen kept one of Lumumba's teeth as a talisman and displayed it on television, admitting that they had dismembered Lumumba's body, dissolved it in sulphuric acid and kept his tooth as a charm. These universal judges have not been moved to prosecute the person who boasts of having dissolved Lumumba's body and kept one of his teeth. I think these people intend to open a museum some time soon and to grow rich charging admission to see Lumumba's tooth.

My African brothers may also be prosecuted when people arrogating the right to appoint members of Government issue warrants for them. That is why my brothers should not remain silent. They are foreign ministers and the same thing could happen to them. They should react. They should not think of me as someone who is uneducated. These countries must be prevented from acting beyond their rights. No one assigned them the task of running the world's affairs through their own brand of justice.

I do not wish to linger on this ridiculous topic, but I would go even further in discussing truth and mendacity. Everyone is convinced that we are erecting obstacles to the diplomatic work of the United Nations, but Lumumba's tooth should be a sign that we have historical reasons for our actions. What goes around comes around. I recognize that we have been very particular about how the United Nations forces may be deployed, but we have acceded to the Organization's wishes. We agreed to the Mission and to the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, although the fire has yet to cease. People persist in believing in the validity of the Agreement, but it was signed on 10 July 1999 and the fires are still burning today and the war continues. Still, people keep talking about the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement.

Well, the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement designates the invaders, the aggressors, as "parties". These parties signed the Agreement, but Security Council resolution 1304 (2000) implies that they are the aggressors and enjoins them to leave my country. Thus, they are no longer parties, but aggressors who should leave as soon as possible.

Moreover, their Congolese puppets are playing the role of Trojan horse. These invaders have exploited certain Congolese supporters of Mobutu to justify their invasion of our country and their aggression. Now, one of these asteroids is giving shelter to Mobutu's former soldiers. They are training in Kampala and their aim of returning to Kinshasa has been openly declared. One large country is helping others to build military bases on our borders and is training their soldiers in order to increase tourism in our country.

We must be vigilant. We must act to ensure the implementation of the United Nations resolutions. We would tell the United Nations that, in order to be more effective and to have a greater chance of success, it must implement its own resolutions. I would express the hope that I shall not have to return here next year to repeat yet again that the Rwandans are still in my country, sowing death and pillaging our land. The United Nations must finally implement its own resolutions.

How can it do so? It can compel the Ugandans and Rwandans to return to their homes. We do not want them in our country. They are our eternal neighbours, asteroids that orbit our planet. Let them go home. Let them talk to us. We want this war to end as all others do: with negotiations. The Second World War ended in negotiations, the war in Algeria ended in negotiations between France and the National Liberation Front, the war in Viet Nam ended in negotiations between the host country here and the Vietnamese, the war between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, which has broken all endurance records, is showing signs of ending soon. How? Through negotiations between the Catholics and the Protestants.

Just the other day, in reference to another topic, I mentioned that Security Council resolution 242 (1967) was adopted over 40 years ago, but that it is only now beginning to be implemented. Now, we are not going to wait 40 years for our Clinton and our Camp David. The United Nations must implement its resolutions immediately. It must support us to ensure that the aggressors, whatever they may say, go home. They are not at home. We do not want them in our country. They must go home.

The Second World War erupted after a long incubation. We now see hope for perpetual peace following that war, but I agree with Paul Eluard that we must be vigilant because the womb that bore the vile beast is still fertile. We want all men, even our enemies, to be our brothers. We want to rebuild our country, which was dismantled by the excesses of

Mobutu Like Lizard, we want to turn water into light and, as I said, to make every man our brother.

That is my message to the Assembly. I repeat: do not tell me:

*(spoke in English)*

"You have made a wonderful speech."

*(spoke in French)*

Say: "We have understood your message and we shall tell our Governments to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions immediately so that the aggressors go home". Please help us to talk with them, in order to put an end to this war, which should end as all wars end. Some of us lost all our hair waiting for the blessed day, 17 May 1997, after 32 years of activity. Look at President Kabila's head and mine; we can be recognized by our advanced baldness, which came about while we were waiting for the moment when we could re-enter Kinshasa.

So, my African brothers and my brothers from other countries, including many from Latin America, I conclude with a Spanish saying. I do not wish to translate it, so those who do not understand will have to stop a Spanish-speaking colleague and ask "What did he say?"

*(spoke in Spanish)*

"When your neighbour's house is on fire, watch out for your own house."

*The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.*